

10/8/2010

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3/21/99
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THE UNITED PARISH OF UPTON

UPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I

NAME & DEFINITION

NAME

This Church shall be called the United Parish of Upton, Massachusetts.

DEFINITION

The United Parish is a Federated Church made up of members of the First Congregational Church of Upton-United Church of Christ and the Upton United Methodist Church-New England Conference.

ARTICLE II

FAITH & COVENANT

FAITH

This Parish acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world. It acknowledges as brothers and sisters in Christ all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church as expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insight of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, it recognizes two Sacraments: Baptism, and the Lord's Supper (or Holy Communion).

COVENANT

We covenant one with another to seek and to respond to the Word and the Will of God. We purpose to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Parish to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the entire world, while worshipping God, and striving for truth, Justice, and

10/8/2010

peace. As did our fathers and mothers, we depend upon the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the kingdom of righteousness and eternal life.

VISION STATEMENT

We believe God has called us to be centered and growing in Jesus Christ, celebrating God's love, nurtured by meaningful traditions, and led by the Spirit in new directions.

We are to be a multi-generational, family-centered congregation that invites all people to enjoy friendship with Christ and with one another.

We believe God has called us to tend the fabric of our congregational life with compassion and joy, fostering and nurturing relationships of care. We are to empower each other to express our spiritual gifts in every aspect of our lives.

We believe God has called us to use our strength to provide active and vital outreach ministries to our community and world. We are to actively and faithfully plan for the purposeful growth of our church.

ARTICLE III

POLITY

- A. The Congregational membership of the United Parish shall be a part of the United Church of Christ, and it shall sustain that relationship to the United Church of Christ as described in those portions of the most recently amended Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ relating to local churches, and as deemed appropriate by the Parish membership.
- B. The Methodist membership of the United Parish shall be a part of the United Methodist Church and it shall sustain that relationship as described in those portions of the most recent edition of the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, and as deemed appropriate by the Parish membership.
- C. The government of the Parish is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs. The Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts relating to not for profit or ecclesiastical corporations shall apply.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP

- A. **New members** will join either the First Congregational Church of Upton or the Upton United Methodist Church, whereby they become members of the United Parish of Upton.
- B. In order to unite with either Church, persons shall confess Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord, and will become members by:
 - 1. Having been baptized,
 - 2. Preparing with the Pastor, and
 - 3. Having letters of transfer or making a profession of faith.
- C. New members enter into the Parish's covenant, subscribe to its By-Laws and are formally received into its fellowship during a Sunday service or by arrangement with the Pastor.
- D. **Responsibilities** – Members are expected to be faithful in spiritual duties essential to the Christian life, to attend habitually the services of the Parish, to give regularly for its support and its charities, and to share in its organized work.
- E. **Rights** – Members may act and vote in the transactions of the Parish.
- F. **Termination/Transfer of Membership**
 - 1. Members of the United Methodist Church shall be regulated by the most recent edition of the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.
 - 2. Members of the United Church of Christ shall be subject to the principles and usages of Congregational Churches as described in the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE V

OFFICERS

All officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting for a one-year term.

A. CHAIRPERSON

1. Shall preside at all meetings of the Parish and at meetings of the Administrative Council.
2. May fill any vacancies that occur during the year, in any office or committee, with the approval of the Administrative Council.

B. VICE CHAIRPERSON

1. Shall assist the Chairperson.
2. Shall assume the responsibilities of the office of the Chairperson when necessary.

C. CLERK

1. Shall keep a faithful record of all proceedings at Parish and Administrative Council Meetings.
2. Shall be responsible for providing membership lists at all Parish meetings.
3. Shall perform such other duties as pertains to the office.

D. TREASURER

1. Shall be responsible for the receipt, maintenance and disbursement of all Parish monies and shall keep suitable books of all accounts.
2. Shall keep the Parish funds in such banking institutions as shall be approved by the Business Committee.
3. Shall be a member of the Business Committee.

E. ASSISTANT TREASURER

1. Shall assist the Treasurer and assume the Treasurer's duties in the absence of the Treasurer.
2. Shall be a member of the Business Committee.

F. FINANCIAL SECRETARY

1. Shall be responsible for maintaining records of all monies received for the support of public worship, major paint and repair and missions.
2. Shall keep accurate records of all individual gifts and pledges and provide yearly reports to all members and constituents.
3. Shall be a member of the Business Committee.

G. AUDITOR

1. Shall be responsible for auditing the financial records of all Officers, Committees, Commissions and Boards.
2. Shall provide an annual report to the Parish.

10/8/2010

H. HISTORIAN/CURATOR

1. Shall be responsible for recording the history of the United Parish.
2. Shall keep a list of memorials and provide suggestions for memorials to the Administrative Council.

ARTICLE VI

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION ON COMMITTEES

- A. Service on all Committees is voluntary and as such members should make every effort to be present at all meetings.
- B. Minutes, including names of members attending, shall be recorded.
- C. A committee shall have a quorum if 50% of the membership and a minimum of two members are present.
- D. Members of the committees should notify the Chairperson if they are unable to attend.
- E. Only official members of the United Parish of Upton may serve in the following capacities: Administrative Council, Vision Council, Diaconate Committee, Officers, Business Committee, and Delegates to the U.C.C. and U.M.C. Conferences.

ARTICLE VII

GUIDELINES FOR PARISH MEETINGS AND RELATED MATTERS

A. PARISH MEETINGS

1. The Administrative Council shall call Parish meetings.
2. Notice of United Parish Meetings, stating the business of the meeting, shall be read from the Pulpit for at least two Sundays before the meeting is to take place.
3. Thirty (30) members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
4. All members of the Parish may vote at Parish Meetings. The Clerk shall be responsible for providing current membership lists.
5. If a secret ballot is requested, approval must be granted by a majority vote of members present. The Clerk will record each member voting. The Chairperson/Moderator may appoint tellers to assist in counting the ballots.
6. The Annual Meeting of the United Parish shall be held during the last full week in January. At this meeting the Boards, Committees, the Officers of the Parish, the Pastor(s), and all Parish organizations shall submit their Annual Reports in writing. Election of officers and members of Boards, Commissions and Committees shall be held.

B. RULES OF ORDER

The rules of order are defined and outlined in Article XIII.

C. DISTRIBUTION AND AMENDMENTS

1. Upon request, members will be given the most recent edition of the By-Laws.
2. Amendments to these By-Laws may be made at any duly called Parish Meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present, public announcement of the proposed amendment(s) having been made two Sundays prior to the meetings. The Administrative Council shall have copies of the proposed By-Laws readily available to any interested member of the Parish.

ARTICLE VIII

GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

- A. The Pastoral Leadership shall alternate between the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church in the following manner.
 - 1. A denomination will have pastoral leadership for a minimum of 5 years.
 - 2. In the interest of filling a vacancy as expeditiously as possible, if a suitable candidate cannot be found from the denomination being sought, after a period of 24 months, from date of the first profile, candidates may be sought from both the U.C.C. and the U.M.C. denominations.
 - 3. If the church has two (2) full-time Pastors, there will be one (1) from each denomination.
- B. The Conference Executive of both denominations shall be notified as soon as a Pastoral vacancy is known.
- C. In filling a vacancy, or in securing interim ministers for the period of the vacancy, the Parish, through the Personnel Committee, may seek the counsel of the Conference Executives, request them to secure relevant information about any pastor whom it wishes to consider for the vacancy, and authorize them to discuss the vacancy with any interested candidate.
- D. The Personnel Committee, or appointed Search Committee, shall present to the Parish at a duly called Parish meeting the name of the candidate it recommends to fill the vacancy. A 70% vote of the members present at a Parish meeting shall constitute a call.
- E. The call shall state the terms of the relationship, including the agreement of the Parish to participate in the Pension Fund, and any Health and Life Insurance Programs. The Minister, the Parish and the Conference Executives shall each receive a copy of the call.
- F. Dual standing by the Minister shall be encouraged.
- G. When a Minister accepts a call to the Parish, the Minister shall join in requesting a service of Installation or Recognition (with both denominations taking part).
- H. Termination:
 - 1. In order to terminate the relationship the Pastor shall give at least a three (3) month notice.
 - 2. The Parish will have the option to terminate the relationship at a Parish meeting, giving no less than three (3) months notice to the Pastor.

10/8/2010

3. Termination is to be ratified by the Administrative Council through notification of the Conference Executives.
- I. Discipline of the Pastor shall be in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ and/or the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.
 - J. The Parish may, at its discretion, choose an Associate and/or Assistant Pastor(s).

ARTICLE IX

PARISH LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY

Leadership:

The leadership structure of the United Parish is represented by three elements that are expected and required to work together and collaborate to guide the administrative, visionary, and spiritual endeavors of the congregation. The three elements are: the Administration Council, the Vision Council, and the Pastor(s). Each of these elements represents a critical constituency. Alone none of these elements could effectively provide the leadership necessary and expected by the congregation. By collaborating cooperatively and equally these three elements will provide the comprehensive leadership expected and required to achieve the goals and objectives of the United Parish.

1. **Administrative Council** – The Administrative Council is comprised of the Parish Chairperson, Parish Vice-Chair, Clerk, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, the Pastor and representatives from each of the permanent standing committees. The Administrative Council will establish a regular meeting date and meet monthly from September through June of each calendar year (or more frequently as required). The role of the Administrative Council is to manage the monthly business of the United Parish, receive and review the monthly reports of the standing committees, make decisions and implement policy in regards to normal business and administrative functions, review the progress of ongoing activities, approve a yearly budget to present to the congregation for approval, provide support and assistance to the standing committees for the carrying out of Parish programs and business, and provide a forum for the review of issues raised by the Parish.
2. **Vision Council** – The Vision Council is comprised of the Parish Chairperson, Parish Vice Chair, the Pastor, and the chairperson (or representative) of each of the standing committees. The Pastor is responsible for convening and facilitating the Vision Council. The Vision Council will meet quarterly (or more frequently as required) throughout the calendar year. The role of the Vision Council is to lead the church in discerning, articulating, implementing, and evaluating a shared vision for our Parish. The council will be responsible for prayerfully listening for the leading of the Spirit, understanding the will of the congregation, determining Parish strategic and long-term spending priorities, coordinating with the Administration Council and standing committees, and recommending initiatives and actions towards the end of pursuing the shared vision.
3. **Pastor** – The Pastor(s) will attend and provide spiritual leadership to both the Administrative Council and the Vision Council. The Pastor will provide both councils with leadership for the prayerful attendance to the Holy Spirit and the theological discipline to ensure the leadership of the church remains true to the Christian principles and tenants that guide both denominations.

10/8/2010

It is intended that the Administrative Council and the Vision Council meet separately on most occasions to efficiently attend to their respective callings. The two councils must respect their shared but distinct leadership roles within the Parish. The Administrative Council must incorporate the vision and strategic priorities of the Parish in conducting the monthly business of the church. The Vision Council must work to fit the strategic initiatives of the church into the administrative footprint of the United Parish. The Pastor must provide the leadership necessary for both councils to ground their efforts in the spiritual framework of our faith. It is critical and required that both councils work in concert and collaboration to ensure that the shared vision for the United Parish is achieved in a manner embodied by the principle tenets of our Christian faith.

Ministry:

Ministry is a function of the whole church, engaged in by all members, reflected in all activities. Ministry is done by the whole Parish, never a select few, and all members are ministers. Our conviction is that most ministries happen outside of meetings. We *organize* by committee and *minister* by ministry teams and individuals.

Our Church is structured by three broad areas of ministry: Ministry of Resources, Ministry of Outreach, Ministry of Nurture, and Ministry of Worship. Within these broad areas of ministry, our Church contains 11 committees.

Ministry of Resources

Spiritual Gifts
Business
Personnel
Buildings and Grounds
Technology

Ministry of Outreach

Faith in Action
Stewardship
Nursery Advisory Board

Ministry of Nurture

Faith Development
Member Care and Nurture
Deacons

ARTICLE X

MINISTRY OF RESOURCES

We believe God has entrusted us with the responsibility of overseeing and nurturing our given resources. These resources include the spiritual gifts of our members, the physical buildings and grounds of our church, the personnel we employ and the financial assets we possess. To fulfill this responsibility we have organized these committees.

Business Committee:

The role of the Business Committee is to assist in the faithful and prudent use of the Parish's financial resources, with specific oversight of budget, investment and insurance concerns. These responsibilities include: the tracking of income and expenses, payment of bills, preparing a proposed budget to the Administration Team, preparing an annual report, oversight of endowed funds, maintenance of insurance policies and other tasks related to the ministry of financial resources within our Parish as they are identified and needed.

Members (5): Treasurer, Asst. Treasurer and Financial Secretary, Chair and Member at Large

Spiritual Gifts Committee:

The role of the Spiritual Gifts Committee is to assist the congregation in identifying, nurturing and employing their spiritual gifts, talents and callings. These responsibilities include developing opportunities for education and training in the area of spiritual gifts; assisting individuals, committees and ministry teams in matching members with ministries; and other tasks related to the ministry of spiritual gifts within our Parish as they are identified and needed.

Members (5): Chair and (4) at-large

Personnel Committee:

The role of the Personnel Committee is to assist the congregation in hiring, nurturing, supporting evaluating and when necessary, terminating the paid staff members of the church. These responsibilities include: the creation and maintenance of specific job descriptions; assisting in all phases of the job candidate search and selection process; supporting church staff with issues related to payroll and benefits; participating in the professional development and evaluation of each paid staff member; supporting and managing all parties involved in grievances, complaints and crisis intervention related to paid church staff, including the Pastor-Parish Relations Ministry Team; assisting committees and ministry teams in any personnel-related tasks as needed.

Members (5): Chair and (4) at-large

10/8/2010

Buildings and Grounds Committee:

The role of the Buildings and Grounds Committee is to oversee the physical needs of the church and grounds. The committee will develop teams to address specific tasks drawing from the Parishioners and selecting those whose gifts are skills in the areas needed for the task at hand. The committee will oversee all maintenance, improvements and beautification projects of the church; will provide oversight and support to the Parish custodian and coordinate with the Personnel Committee when and if a new custodian is needed.

Members (3): Chair and (2) at-large

Technology Committee:

The role of the Technology Committee is to oversee the technological needs of the Church. The committee will recommend purchases and maintain computers, networking equipment, printers, phones, faxes, copiers, and the audio/visual equipment of the Church. The committee will coordinate with the Administrative Council to develop a budget for continual improvements and purchase of equipment.

Members (3): Chair and (2) at Large

ARTICLE XI

MINISTRY OF OUTREACH

We believe God has called us to use our strength to provide active and vital outreach ministries to our community, region and world. We are to actively and faithfully plan for the purposeful growth of our church. We believe God's vision for us is to advocate for peace, hope, and love. To fulfill these responsibilities we have organized these committees.

Nursery School Advisory Board:

The role of the Nursery School Committee is to work with the Nursery School Director (and, through the Director, the staff) to provide a quality Nursery School program to the greater Upton community and to serve as a liaison between Nursery School and Church programs. These responsibilities include: assisting the director in formulating policies, offering advice and support in overall management, bookkeeping (primarily through the work of the Nursery School Treasurer, and meeting the goals of the school which reflect the ministry and mission of the Parish.

Members (5): Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, and *two* committee members

Stewardship Committee:

The role of the Stewardship Committee is to nurture and support the Parish in becoming "a congregation of generous people" who support their church joyfully and generously. These responsibilities include: coordinating the Parish's annual stewardship drive; working year-round to broaden and deepen members' understanding of the ministry of money and a spiritual practice of stewardship in their own lives and in the life of the church; providing communication and opportunities for growth in the realm of stewardship for themselves and the Parish as a whole.

Members (3): Chair and (2) at-large

Faith in Action Committee

The role of the Faith in Action Committee is to visualize, prioritize, and support the Church's outreach to and advocacy for local, regional, and world communities. The primary focus of the Faith in Action Committee is to motivate the congregation towards mission work. The Faith in Action committee shall develop and maintain a dynamic vision for Church outreach; plan and prioritize projects yearly; organize and provide oversight to mission teams working on specific purposes.

Members: Chair and (4) at-large

ARTICLE XII

MINISTRY OF NURTURE

We believe God has called us to be centered and growing in Jesus Christ, celebrating God's love, nurtured by meaningful traditions and led by the Spirit in new directions. We are to be multi-generational, family-centered congregation that invites all people to enjoy friendship with Christ and with one another. We are to tend the fabric of our congregational life with compassion and joy, fostering and nurturing relationships of care. To fulfill these responsibilities we have organized these committees.

Faith Development Committee

The Faith Development committee works with the Christian Education Director, and in consultation with the Pastor, to support the faith maturation of children, youth, and adults. This responsibility includes: oversight of Sunday School and Youth Groups; support for adult education ministries; recruiting leadership for and supporting Vacation Bible School; being a resource for retreat and small group ministries within the Parish, and other educational and faith formation tasks as deemed necessary.

Members (5): Chair and (4) at-large

Member Care and Nurture Committee

The role of the Member Care Committee is to invite, welcome, support and nurture membership within the Parish. This responsibility includes: outreach and invitation to potential members; welcoming visitors; assisting with new member reception; assisting with the upkeep of member rolls; oversight and nurture of the covenantal bonds of membership that make possible a healthy and united church body.

Members (5): Chair and (4) at-large

Deacons Committee

The role of the Deacons is to work with the Pastor to guide and support the worship life and spiritual nurture of the Parish. This responsibility includes: worship support, including Sunday services, special services, baptisms, funerals and weddings; serving of Holy Communion in church and to members at home; tending to the spiritual needs of the congregation along with the Pastor(s); tending to their own growth as spiritual leaders of the church.

Members (6-12): Chair, Treasurer and (4-10) at-large

ARTICLE XIII

Conduct of Meetings

Decision Making Process – Seeking the Common Mind of the Meeting

The intention of all Parish decision-making is to seek God's will and allow God to lead the way in our life together. By listening to all voices and taking all concerns seriously, we open ourselves up to hear God speak through any and all involved in the decision-making process. Therefore whenever possible Parish decisions shall be made using consensus and discernment to help come to a decision that is acceptable to all involved and, to the best of our ability, faithfully listens for the leadership of Christ.

Consensus shall be understood as seeking the common mind of the meeting without resort to a formal vote, in a process of genuine dialogue that is respectful, mutually supportive and empowering, while prayerfully seeking to discern God's will. Decisions will normally be by consensus, unless otherwise specified by the By-Laws as follows.

Parliamentary procedure may be used to decide upon issues that meet the following criteria:

- Routine business
- Issue has near or full agreement
- Time does not allow for discernment
- The group is willing to accept a majority rule when a common solution cannot be found.
- By-law revision
- Elections
- Adoption of yearly accounts and of the financial audit report
- For matters that have been moved from consensus to decision-making by vote.